

Background

The SNC held its first annual symposium on December 5, 2007 focused on climate change and the Sierra Nevada. The event was attended by more than 300 individuals representing a wide range of perspectives and organizations. Speakers and panelists presented information addressing issues specific to the potential effects of climate change on the Sierra Nevada, how the Region may contribute positively to reducing the impacts and how communities and individuals can adapt.

Current Status

Since the Symposium and the Board meeting the following day, staff has taken a number of steps consistent with the Board discussion:

- Information from the Symposium has been posted on the SNC Web site. In addition, a number of climate change links have been added to the SNC Web site;
- The SNC has joined with the Resources Agency, the California Tahoe Conservancy and the US Forest Service in securing the services of Steve Eubanks (former Forest Supervisor on the Tahoe National Forest) to identify an approach for creation of a Sierra Nevada Climate Change Action Plan. Mr. Eubanks will work with all of us, other state and federal agencies and key stakeholders in identifying options and opportunities for creating such a plan (a copy of the work plan for this project is included with this agenda item);
- Members of the Sierra Nevada Strategic Investment Team have identified climate change liaisons to interact with the SNC, other state and federal agencies and stakeholders to coordinate actions that can be taken to address climate change-related issues in the Sierra. For example, we have discussed with a number of other state agencies the need to develop climate change-related “filters” to be used in the evaluation of projects being considered for funding;
- Kerri Timmer represented the SNC as a panelist on local cable television program titled “Climate Changes,” with plans to contribute information to and participate in future shows;
- The SNC is on the Planning Committee for the UC Davis Sustainability Conference, hosted by the Center for the Study of Regional Change, to be held May 5-7, 2008, in conjunction with the Great Valley Center annual conference;
- Staff is also in the process of developing modifications to the Strategic Plan to more accurately reflect the SNC’s goals and objectives relating to climate change.

Recommendation

No action is needed from the Board; however the Chair may wish to appoint a committee of the Board to assist staff in development of a Sierra Nevada Climate Action Plan. Staff also welcomes any suggestions or recommendations from the Board relative to our ongoing activities described above.

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2/28/2008

Sierra Nevada Climate Change Center

Background:

Following the Sierra Nevada Conservancy-sponsored symposium on climate change in December, 2007, there were discussions about creating a climate change initiative that would help deal with the predicted effects of climate change in a proactive way.

General Concept:

- Establish a central “clearing house” related to climate change information. The Climate Change Center would be initially established and coordinated by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the California Tahoe Conservancy, in cooperation with state and federal agencies and regional stakeholders. It is anticipated that the Center could eventually evolve into an operation involving multiple partners and would be responsible for the following:
 - Assist in the development of a Sierra Nevada Climate Change Action Plan.
 - Provide basic networking and coordination for climate change information and climate change-related activities occurring in the Sierra Nevada area.
 - Provide advocacy for activities dealing with climate change, including the identification of funding and investment opportunities in the region.
 - Publicize successful activities dealing with climate change.
 - Be a “convening organization” that would create forums for sharing information on a broader scale, particularly sharing among researchers/scientists, practitioners, and communities of interest.

Next Steps:

While the general concept of a climate center has been discussed and there is enthusiasm for the potential benefits of such a center, there are still questions about details, particularly what should be the scope of a climate change center operation. To further develop the concept, facilitated discussions will be held with key contacts and stakeholders. Outcomes from the discussions will include the following:

- Role(s) of the Climate Center. In more detail, what specifically will the Climate Center do? It is recognized that there are many entities involved in the general arena of climate change so a Sierra Nevada Climate Change Center must provide some kind of added value in order to be justified.
- Scope of work for the Climate Center. Given the importance and growing priority of climate change, the scope of a new climate center’s activities can be almost any level, from small to quite large. It will be important to decide early-on what level is desired.
- Development of an initial Climate Action Plan. Based on the role and scope, what are the key areas of focus for the Climate Center for the next several years? This would include times, responsibilities and opportunities for collaboration.

- Possible development of linkages with similar climate change-related activities in Europe, including potential interaction with a climate change center addressing issues in the Alps.

Specific Products to Be Completed:

- A report describing Role(s) and Scope of Work of the Climate Center. This paper will be completed through facilitated discussions with key partners and stakeholders.
- Climate Action Plan. The action plan will outline priorities or areas of focus for the Climate Center for the next 2-5 years. Again, the development of the Climate Action Plan will involve facilitated discussions with key partners and stakeholders. The possible development of linkages with climate change-related activities in Europe or elsewhere will be included in the action plan discussions.
- An outline of duties for management/leadership of the Climate Center. Once the role(s), scope of work and action plan are completed, it will be possible to determine the appropriate management structure needed to operate the Climate Center.

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